

Town Office Tales

Curiosities and observations on the history, people, and objects inside and outside Town Hall.

Rules and Regulations Part 2

Weights and measures were an integral part of early municipal regulations, preserving public health, ensuring truthful advertising and ethical business practices, and creating a enforcing a standardized system across the Commonwealth. Below is the custom-built cabinet for West Newbury's calculators of area, and wet and dry mass and volume.



The lower tier of the two-tier cabinet contains more scales and a series of circular indentations cut into the wood—corresponding to standard sizes for checking circumference, as does the tool below hung on the back wall of the cabinet.



DIRECTIONS FOR USING THE MASSACHUSETTS STANDARD BALANCES, WEIGHTS, AND MEASURES.

Raise the Balance, by depressing the lever, and if one scale appears heavier than the other, they are balanced by moving the equipoise, or brass ball in the circular opening, on the top of the beam, upon the horizontal screw, towards the lightest scale, until an equilibrium is produced.

Let the scales down to a state of rest while placing the weights thereon, both the standard weight and the weight to be adjusted; great care should be taken that the weight should be placed near the centre in each scale. Be careful that no weights be put on or taken off while the scales are raised. In raising or lowering the beam, the lever-handle should not be suffered to slip from the hand, for a sudden fall will tend to destroy the nice points of suspension, on which the accuracy of the balance essentially depends.

In sealing the Measures, both liquid and dry, water is preferable; the holes and cracks which in some instances are found in wooden measures, may be first filled with a little hard soap, or grease; the use of seed or grain of any kind should be avoided.

Boston, July 1, 1848.

if possible, its bulk being very changeable. Oil the top of the measures after using. The two pieces of plate-glass are intended for strikes for the measures.

To save the trouble of lifting the dry measures when filled with water, there is an appendage to be attached to the end of the case, where there is a socket for that purpose, called a tripod, or half-circle, with adjusting slides for the suspension of each dry measure when used for sealing, and when thus placed, it is then ready to be filled with water, and is discharged into the measure to be sealed while resting on the tripod.

The tea tube is for the purpose of displacing water from the Standard measure, so as to render it convenient for pouring the balance of the contents into the measure to be sealed. The tube is made tapering, so that it may be carefully inserted, and when done, one of the fingers must be placed upon the aperture at the side, near the top, while passing it to the measure for sealing.

HOWARD & DAVIS, Manufacturers, Boston.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The following is a List of the Standards as furnished to each Town, City and County in the Commonwealth, according to the Acts and Resolves, passed in 1847 and 1848; and the same are the Standards approved by the Legislature of the State for supplying said Standard Weights, Measures and Balances.

The Standards embrace the following, viz:—

- One Avoirdupois Balance for Sixteen Divisions, viz:—
- One Set of Avoirdupois Weights of Sixteen Divisions, viz:—
- DRACHMS.—1, 2, dr.
- OUNCES.—1, 2, 4, 8, 16, oz.
- POUNDS.—1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, lb.
- One Set of LIQUID MEASURES, of Six Divisions, viz:—
- Gill, Half-Pint, Pint, Quart, Two Quarts, Gallon.
- One Set of DRY MEASURES, of Five Divisions, viz:—
- Quart, Two Quarts, Half-Peck, Peck, Half-Bushel.
- One YARD MEASURE.

The foregoing Standards are accompanied with a Chain or Cassette, in which the Standards are to be kept in a state of preservation; all arranged in separate compartments.

Boston, July 1st, 1848.

JOS. BARRETT, COMMISSIONER.

CHAS. A. WELLS.

HOWARD & DAVIS STANDARD BALANCES, WEIGHTS, AND MEASURES.

The interior of the cabinet explains State standards (above) and a promotional poster for the manufacturer of the West Newbury scale.

Zoom in for a closer look!



No. 9 Fig. A
Calibrate 12oz.

HOWARD & DAVIS
MANUFACTURERS OF
BALANCES & CLOCKS

CHURCH TOWER.
GALLERY & OFFICE.
STATION.

COLD STANDARD for BANKS.







Portable scale owned by the West Newbury Department of Weights and Measures whose instructions ask the user to “adjust the balance box by means of the three leveling screws until the bubble is in the center” to



calibrate the entire apparatus for weighing.